

February 24, 2011

Testimony in favor of Senate Bill 986 to the Labor and Public Employees Committee

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Zaleski and Committee Members,

My name is Peter Rabinowitz MD MPH. I am the Director of Clinical Services for the Yale Occupational and Environmental Medicine Program. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide additional testimony in favor of Senate Bill 986, and appreciate your consideration of this letter since I will be out of town on February 24 due to preexisting professional commitments.

The Yale Occupational and Environmental Medicine Program has been clinically evaluating Connecticut workers for over 20 years for possible work-related illness and injury. Our clinic takes a preventive approach, through understanding the hazardous work exposures that contributed to the illness or injury, and working with employers to try and reduce these hazards for the benefit both of the patient as well as other workers.

I want to emphasize to the Committee that the workers compensation system is the only recourse for many of these workers to ensure that their medical needs are taken care of following a work related illness or injury. At the same time, there are already significant obstacles to filing a workers compensation claim and having it approved and able to provide the necessary support during the critical and stressful time when a worker is recovering and attempting to return to work. It is essential that new interruptions to this process not be introduced. The downside of such interruptions is that the medical care of the patient suffers, the patient experiences often severe financial hardship, and that the process of returning to work can be significantly delayed. My understanding is that Senate Bill 986 will help ensure that care does not get interrupted, and that injured and ill workers receive their needed services.

For Connecticut to remain competitive in the global marketplace, there need to be adequate safeguards in place to ensure safe and healthy work conditions, and to ensure that injured workers speedily recover and are able to return to work. Senate Bill 986 is essential to aid in this process.

Sincerely,

Peter Rabinowitz MD MPH

Director of Clinical Services

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Associate Professor of Medicine

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